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Interesting Use of the Small Spinning-Wheel, as shown
in the Portrait of Mlle. Loizeralle, by Aved, Court
Painter. Engraved by Baléchou

A DREAM OF FINE LINEN

THE linen closet of a wealthy woman of today is almost as beautiful to look into as her jewel safe. So great is the store of fine linen in wealthy households that the linen closet of such a home is more apt to be a linen room. Usually it is finished entirely in white. Even the shelves are white and are trimmed with real lace. In fact lace has become a great factor in the linen supply of rich households and has added immensely to the expense of the store of linen in the linen room. Embroidered sheets costing a hundred dollars apiece no longer are reserved for especially honored guests but are used for members of the family; and while a few years ago a family might have no more than a dozen such sheets—a dozen sheets that cost \$1,200—today it will have a complete supply of them.

Embroidered initials and other embroidered designs also are more elaborate than formerly and applied more generally to all articles that are included in the linen supply. In the trousseau of a young woman recently married, not only were the fine linens elaborately initialed or monogrammed, but also the pieces for the help. The butler's dusters, the maid's aprons and dusting caps and even the pantry towels were duly marked in embroidery. It is not difficult to imagine the elaborate character of such a linen trousseau; and the end is not yet, since linen with lace borders for use on beds and in the napery are con-

sidered ever more essential in households conducted on a lavish scale and yet guided by refinement.

Indeed the elaborate linen trousseau of a modern bride, may be called a revival of an Italian mediæval and Renaissance custom, when the bridal chest was provided and began to be filled while a girl was still in her childhood. Such chests often were elaborately carved or their panels painted by distinguished artists. Especially was this true of the front panel—the "cassone front" valued by the collector and museum of today. It was, of course, the wealthier families that fitted out their daughters upon marriage with linen chests that were imposing pieces of decoration executed by noted artists. In fact, the cassone of the Italian bride may be said to have corresponded to the elaborate linen room of the wealthy American bride of today. But just as the modern bride, whose circumstances will not permit her to set up a linen room or purchase expensive napery and bed coverings, will have her modest linen closet, so the Italian bride of more moderate means and even the country girl had her cassone. There must always be a beginning; and at the January "white sales" which give the American girl of today, whether wealthy or only of moderate means, so enviable an advantage over her Italian predecessor, a linen trousseau, modest in quality and quantity or most elaborate, beautiful and expensive can be secured.

Quality being taken for granted in a wealthy and at the same time refined household, it is quantity that makes the linen room a necessity. Otherwise how beautiful it would be to revive the cassone; and why, by the way, could it not be revived and put into use to hold the linen supply for the household for each week? The grand linen supply would be regarded as stored in the linen room, the week's supply as "mobilised" in the cassone. Think how delightful it would be to have a cassone decorated by a distinguished artist of the day, or to be able to secure one of the real old Italian marriage chests which one of the great Italian artists had decorated for a noble bride of the Renaissance. Such a chest filled with snowy napery would in itself be a dowry.

The great quantity of fine napery used in a wealthy household is due not so much to the size of the household, as to the fact that no article of napery is used more than once, but, before being used again, is retired to be laundered and then sent to the linen room until its turn for another single appearance comes around once more. An exception may be made of the table cloth. It is not wholly unusual to lay the table cloth that has been laid for dinner also for breakfast the next morning. But many households lay a fresh table cloth both for dinner and for breakfast; and napkins never are permitted to be used more than once. That is why a person brought up to the usages of society, never folds his napkin after meals, whether he is a guest in a household, or a member of it. To fold the napkin would imply that he expects it to be used again. That is

the law of the napkin and practically of all napery. A high class butler would not remain in service in a household where any other rule obtained. He would be afraid of unconsciously losing cast if he were to tolerate himself in the act of laying a napkin at a place for the second consecutive time. (In fact English butlers, after being in service here for a few years, not infrequently return to England and go into service there for awhile, in order to "brush up.")

The simple fact is that, whereas in the old days fresh napery was laid for company, a household today, not only as regards napery but also the complete service, admits of no distinction between occasions when there are guests at table and when there are none. A girl whom I know tells with glee of going home with a school-mate to luncheon in a household where it required the services of a butler and "second" man to pass baked apples for dessert. The table, as is customary at luncheon in households that can afford fine napery, was laid with a wonderful lace centerpiece and doilies; for which I may add, there may be substituted a lace luncheon cloth with embroidered or lace-bordered napkins. As the lace is of the finest—Cluny, old Italian, etc.—the cost of setting up and maintaining a linen room may well be imagined. Calculation of items of napery by the dozen pieces disappears in terms of gross. I know of one woman who among her luncheon centerpieces and doilies, has a set so fine that, when the table is laid, she places over it a top-glass. Thus the luncheon set is seen through the glass on which the luncheon is served.

A writer in *House Beautiful*, in speak-

ing of napery says that "the beauty of a fine cloth, properly laundered, an important point, and properly laid on the table, another important point, will atone for many shortcomings in the way of china and silver and will almost atone, not quite, for a poor dinner. The lay of the table cloth has much to do with the appearance of the table. If it is a square cloth the creases should show, never, never be ironed out in order that the cloth may present a smooth surface. Many housekeepers have or attempt to have the creases pressed out after the cloth is put on the table. This is a mistake, for the well defined crease, straight as an arrow, is part of the 'good form' of the table." Nevertheless table cloths not infrequently are used without the crease which can be accomplished by ironing the linen on both sides.

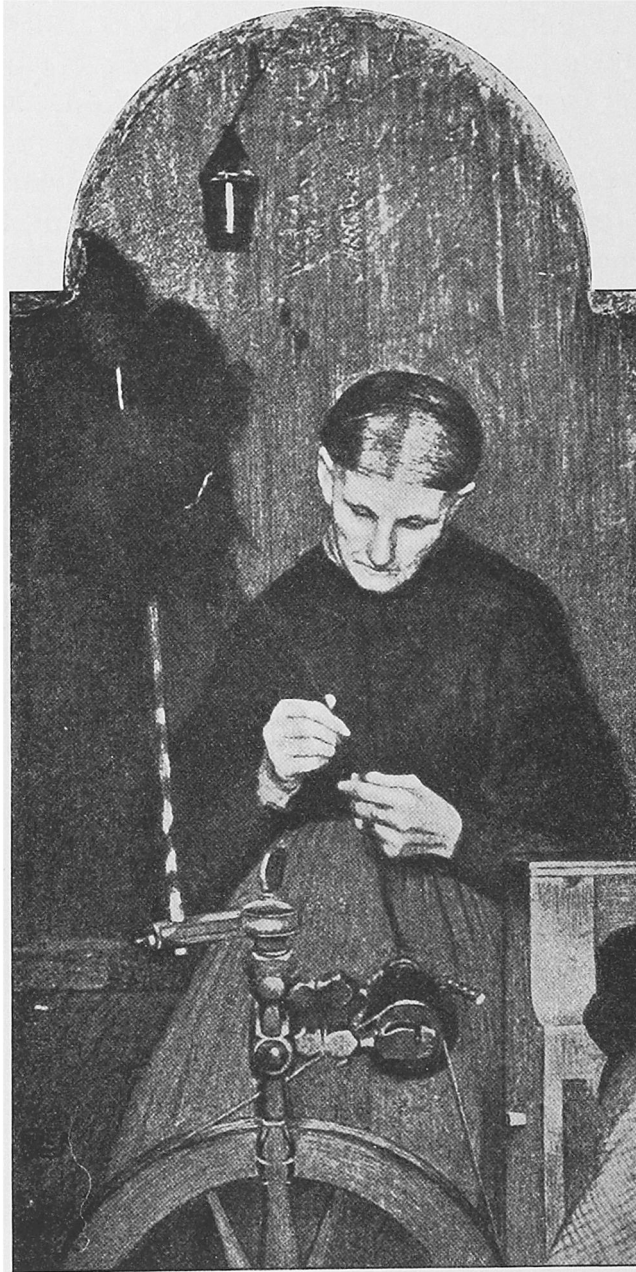
I have spoken about napery for the table. Towels in wealthy households are of the finest damask, often are trim-

med with lace and always have an initial, monogram or other embroidered designs. In fact many designs are most artistic in drawing and composition.

The border of table cloths and other napery is apt to be deep enough so give the designer a chance to produce much in the way of decorative effects, especially with a border of lace. A fine design is formed of the callalily pattern, the pretty leaves being in charming contrast to the large space of plain damask. Wide strips in damask also are very handsome. They run all round in large rings or straight across the table.

The various shamrock motifs always have been popular here, not only for dinner cloths, but also for linen luncheon cloths; and, of course, there are luncheon sets—

centerpieces and doylies of "baby Irish" lace. The patterns for linen are woven very much as are the Jacquard designs in silk. Cards with numerous perforations, through each of which linen threads



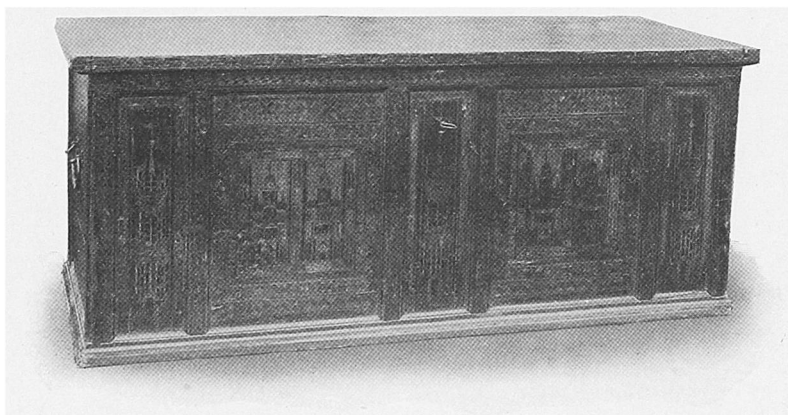
The Spinner, by Marianne Stokes

pass at given intervals when the loom is set—a difficult and intricate task—reproduce the pattern on the perfected piece of linen. Consider the great beauty and subtlety of the woven designs in damask! This beauty seems the more remarkable and is the more appreciated if we pause to realize that the designs are white on white—really symphonies in white. For there is no real colour and the colour effects are brought out or simulated by the threads reflecting the light at different angles.

The popular patterns that may be mentioned include the shamrock filling; ivy border, ivy filling; moire antique, rose border; convolvulus border; nasturtiums, poppies and ornament with centre; snowflakes with centre; snowflakes and crocus border; straw-

berry design; shamrock border and centre; rose, shamrock, ferns and butterflies. The polka dot always has been liked. In England there is a fancy for special designs for special occasions, such as a game cloth for a game dinner. In fact, one of the patterns requiring a great number of cards is a game cloth in which the plumage of pheasants is shown. Another pattern that requires many cards is of wild fowl and is finished in seaweed and seagrass designs in ingenious arrangement and spacing.

American taste in table cloth and nappery does not run to game and fish; nor to special designs for special occasions. The Americans buy more conventional designs.



Courtesy of the Hayden Co.

Elizabethan Nonesuch Linen Chest (Dated About 1590)